U. S. Opens Tax Drive On Rightist Groups

By ALBERT ELLENBERG

The Internal Revenue Service has launched a major drive on right-wing groups enjoying tax-exempt status while carrying on political activities, an IRS spokesman said Saturday.

The move is part of a broad drive to take politically-minded organizations out of the highly-prized tax-exempt category, but most of the fire is being directed at outfits on the right of the political spectrum.

The IRS spokesman explained the right-wing emphasis this way: "We believe we've already done a good job weeding out the left-wing organizations.

"The leftist outfits have been under surveillance for years. Also, we have more complaints on the ultra-conservatives."

Declines to Name Groups

The agency declined to name the groups being investigated, but other sources provided the identity of some of the organizations.

Leading the list, reportedly, is the Daughters of the American Revolution.

In the course of a Congressional hearing, it was learned that the IRS had cracked down on Life Line, an outfit which has received several million dollars from Texas oilman H. L. Hunt. The money was used to finance radio and television broadcasts.

Rev. Billy James Hargis of Tulsa, Okla., said he planned a court fight to regain tax-exempt status for his outfit. Christian Crusade.

2 Local Groups Probed

Two New York organizations with tax-exempt status were said by the sources to be under investigation. They are the American Economic Foundation, 51 E. 42d St., and the Christian Freedom Foundation, 250 W. 57th St.

The Christian Freedom Foundation mails its publication, Christian Economics, to "nearly 200,000 ministers throughout the country," according to its evangelist leader, Howard E. Kershner, In 1962, it reported assets of $200,000.

The major value of the tax-exempt status for these organizations is that contributors can deduct their donations from their personal income tax.

Engaging in *some* religious, educational or philanthropic work is not enough to warrant the tax-exempt status, an IRS spokesman said.

The agency insists that "a tax-exempt organization is not supposed to try to influence legislation."

The IRS recently asked tax-exempt organizations to fill out a new questionnaire. The service is presently investigating these groups at the rate of 10,000 a year.

One right-wing outfit not under IRS inquiry is the John Birch Society. It has never asked for tax-exempt status.